



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE GREGORY S. HOWARD
FORTY-THIRD ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 4200
300 CAPITOL AVENUE
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591

CAPITOL: (860) 240-8700
TOLL FREE: (800) 842-1423
Greg.Howard@housegop.ct.gov

RANKING MEMBER
PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

October 14, 2021

Commissioner Dr. Juthani
410 Capital Ave
Hartford, CT 06106

Commissioner Russell-Tucker
450 Columbus Blvd.
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Commissioner, Juthani and Commissioner Russell-Tucker,

I write to you today out of a serious concern for the children and families in Stonington and North Stonington, a concern I hope you can promptly address.

Each day in my district, children are being prohibited from attending school with their peers due to quarantine protocols. Not only is this very detrimental to our children's education, it also puts a significant burden on working families that must find arrangements for their young children staying unexpectedly home for an extended period. The extra burden on our school staff and the emotional toll, specifically on our nurses who are constantly sending kids out in tears who just want to be in school, can no longer be ignored.

In consultation with the two school districts within my district, I have asked for the number of students that have been quarantined since the start of school. I am still awaiting official data from one but know that the district has quarantined over 150 kids since the start of school. Considering that a 10-day quarantine causes approximately 7 or 8 lost in-person days, that equates to over 1,000 days of lost in-person instruction in 6 weeks of school. Additionally, only 1 of these 150 kids that were quarantined tested positive, lending credence to low transmission in school.

My other district is reporting 98 students have been quarantined with a resulting 700+ lost days of in-person instruction for that district where school started on September 8. This number does not include 127 additional students who lost days due to symptoms pending a negative PCR test out of "an abundance of caution" which likely resulted in an additional 200+ days of lost instruction. Of these quarantined students, none have tested positive, once again lending credence to a lack of transmission in school.

While this sample size is small, the data coming from our neighboring state of Massachusetts is not. Across the state of Massachusetts, approximately 920,000 students attend school. More than 2,200 private and public schools are participating in either rapid testing, pooled testing, test and stay, or a combination of all three. The pooled testing data shows low positivity rates (.84% as of 10/3) and instances of in-school transmission are rare. For the time-period of August 30 – October 3, because of the test and stay policy, Massachusetts has saved nearly 18,000 in-person school days. What an amazing accomplishment for their students!

Vaccination rates in Connecticut are very comparable to Massachusetts with each state among leading states for vaccination rates. On a per capita basis, both Massachusetts and Connecticut have some of the lowest total cases in the nation, with Connecticut cases being lower than Massachusetts. While I recognize that Connecticut DPH and local health officials are reliant on CDC recommendations, it is also important to recognize that CDC provides guidance for an entire nation, and the circumstances in Connecticut are very good in comparison to other states as Connecticut residents have taken the pandemic seriously and worked diligently to mitigate the spread of the virus.

I have several frustrated parents in my district who cannot seem to reconcile how a state that mandates they receive a letter of warning about the importance of school attendance when they plan a family vacation is failing to properly consider overwhelming data that would promote more in-person instruction. Frankly, I understand the frustration and recognize the inconsistency in policy.

Today, I am asking that both the DPH and SDE work collaboratively to provide state-wide guidance to schools that limits quarantining of students where feasible. I am asking that proper consideration of data from our neighboring state Massachusetts, that has pandemic circumstances similar to Connecticut, be given so that our students can get the education that they deserve, and our families are not further unnecessarily burdened. Further, if this collaborative solution includes daily testing, I ask that the state provide funding from federal funds to districts for the tests and staff necessary to implement the state's recommendations. I thank you for considering my input, and the urgent need of residents in my district. I look forward to hearing from you and continuing to work in partnership for the betterment of our state.

Sincerely,



Greg Howard
State Representative, 43rd District